



Fast Facts

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF NURSING HOMES AND LONG-TERM CARE

The California Department of Health Services (DHS) works to protect and enhance the lives of older Californians through programs and initiatives to ensure and improve the quality of nursing home care.

Monitoring and Enforcement Activities

California's monitoring and enforcement activities of nursing homes act as a deterrent to poor quality of care:

- Applications for nursing home licenses are thoroughly pre-screened to deny applicants with either a personal history or business connections with organizations that have a history of running unacceptable or substandard facilities or care.
- California's 1,200 nursing homes are inspected at unannounced intervals, though typically at least every 15 months or upon receipt of a complaint.
- Upon the discovery of poor quality care, DHS may require corrective action, impose fines for serious problems, terminate certification, and revoke licensure, depending upon the severity of the problems.
- Facilities with a history of poor performance are targeted for increased scrutiny in the Department's Focused Enforcement Program.

Initiatives to Improve Care

Positive and productive working relationships with quality long-term care providers and provider organizations are key to the success of DHS initiatives to support improvements in the overall quality of nursing home care in California. Some initiatives include:

- **Best Practices Program**, which identifies exemplary practices in long-term care and publicly acknowledges facilities that have developed and implemented these practices.
- **The Residents' Rights Education Project** disseminates educational materials statewide and provides ongoing training for providers, consumers, and consumers' representatives on residents' rights in nursing homes.

- **Emerging Models of Care.** DHS studies innovations in the field of long-term care (for example, the Eden Alternative, a holistic approach to physical plant, programming, and care designed specifically to combat "the plagues of loneliness, helplessness, and boredom") and how to support them in law and policy revisions to ensure the greatest opportunity for their success in California.
- **Provider Consultation and Support.** Functionally independent of its enforcement activities, DHS provides telephone and on-site consultation to nursing homes regarding state and federal laws and regulations, DHS policies and procedures, and care issues. DHS also provides statewide training and educational materials to providers, advocates, and DHS staff on issues related to care in these areas.
- **Advisory Committees.** DHS regularly schedules meetings with long-term consumer advocacy and provider organizations. These meetings are used as a forum to discuss issues of concern, answer questions, and share information.

Significant Legislation

Recent legislation works to advance the quality of care in California's nursing homes:

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 893** (1998) enables DHS to provide specific information about long-term health care facilities to the public through a statewide toll-free telephone number and the Internet. This information is to be made available on or before July 2002.
- **AB 2141** (1998) requires long term health care facilities to notify DHS within 24 hours of the filing of a bankruptcy petition. AB 2141 also provides that the Department shall notify the appointed bankruptcy trustee of the requirements for operating a facility and requires the trustee to operate the facility according to all state requirements.
- **AB 656** (1999) requires DHS to develop recommendations on ways to expand the availability of training programs for certified nurse assistants and to increase the number of nurse assistants for hire in the state.